

Boscobel cricket nursery in the north

Community Court

by HAYDN GILL

THERE WAS A TIME when Holder's Hill in St James was regarded as a nursery for producing quality cricketers. Boscobel in St Peter is slowly taking over that responsibility.

The rural community has unveiled a growing list of players that has given Boscobel something to be proud about.

A trio of fast bowlers – Pedro Collins, his brother Fidel Edwards and Corey Collymore – put the village on the map a few years ago when they broke into the Barbados and West Indies teams.

In recent times, more youngsters have emerged from the area to maintain the tradition.

Omar Phillips is the latest homegrown Boscobel product to wear West Indies colours, and Kevin McClean, who now lives in the area, also came close to an international debut during the recent series against Bangladesh.

Even before the players of this era came to prominence, Boscobel had already unearthed a figure who the district looked up to.

Blaze the trail

The same way that Clairmonte DePeiza started the Holder's Hill trend, Keith Boyce was the first from Boscobel to blaze the trail.

Boyce, a dynamic all-rounder who played 21 Tests for West Indies in the 1970s, was born in Castle, a stone's throw from the Boscobel Community Centre, and the club plans to use his name to further its push towards developing of the game in the north.

"We believe there is a bit of a legacy as it relates to cricket that perhaps is not as capitalised as it should be," said Clyde Sobers, president of the Boscobel Sports and Social Club.

"We are starting to target that in a big way by the development of the Keith Boyce Memorial Cricket Tournament. There are a number of people who have come under his tutelage and have gone on to play for Barbados and West Indies.

"We boast that apart from Holder's Hill, Boscobel is perhaps the one single area that has produced the largest number of West Indies players.

Rich legacy

"We have a rich legacy of cricket that needs to be tapped and we are hoping that the Keith Boyce tournament could be the fillip for that."

With respect to that tournament, Boscobel has already forged a relationship with the Coleridge and Parry Alumni Association and plans are on stream for next year's competition, which will be launched with the annual Keith Boyce Memorial Lecture on February 25.

The tournament, which will for the first time feature coaching clinics, will culminate with the final on April 28.

"Our objective in that tournament is to provide sporting and educational opportunities for the youth of the north," Sobers said.

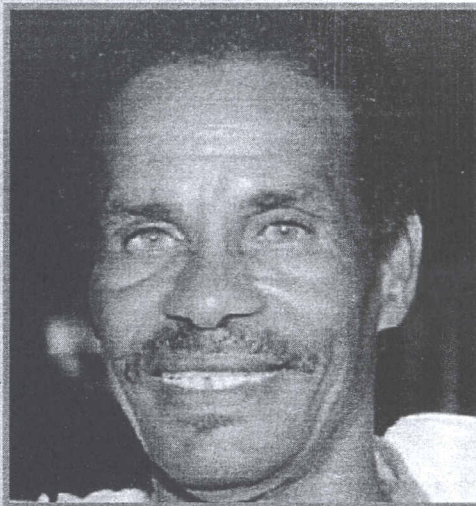
"That includes St Peter, St Lucy, St Andrew and St James. It involves the secondary schools that are in the catchment area and also extends to all Barbados Cricket Association and Barbados Cricket League teams who choose to participate."

Sobers, who has been president of Boscobel for the past eight years, finds it difficult to identify why the area has turned out so much talent, apart from Boyce's influence.

He hinted, however, hinted at the informal academies, that were so common around



BOSCobel BOYS. from left Fidel Edwards, Corey Collymore and Pedro Collins offering each other support during a Test match for West Indies in 2005. (FP)



KEITH BOYCE: first Boscobel trailblazer. (FP)

the island in years gone by but are visibly absent today.

"It is hard to tell. In that catchment area between Portland and Cave Hill Drive, there was a time when in every little area, whether it was a cart road or a wide expanse, people would be playing cricket," he said.

"There was a limitation to the number of activities you had in the area and people played cricket from morning until night. Effectively, people ate and slept cricket."

"Were they born with the natural skills? Perhaps, but maybe there were some motivators. You had Keith Boyce. People had somebody to emulate. I would argue that we could do much better

if we had a really deep commitment by those now to helping the coaching clinics to cultivate the skills that are there. There are a couple others that are coming on."

One disappointment

While Boscobel will lay claim to developing Collins, Edwards, Collymore and company, the one disappointment is that because the club does not play in Division 1, other clubs get the benefit of its players.

It is not an occurrence that bothers Sobers.

"Until we can get to the point when we have committed resource people to help with

the management and delivery of what it takes to run the club efficiently, you are going to come to a stage where we are going to have to let people go," he said.

"Why? They are moving on for better. If somebody plays in Intermediate and that person needs to go on within the Barbados structure to be exposed to first division in order to be given a look in, we are not going to be opposed to that. We will want to be encouraging that."

The origin of the Boscobel Sports and Social Club dates back more than 30 years, when the club was known as Kognicky Braves and was known also for footballers, with the likes of Leon Goddard, Michael Cumberbatch and Walton Benn.

Over time it has evolved mostly into a cricket club, though it was involved in football and netball from time to time. The social element caters to the religious, educational and general social needs of the other members.

"As a club that has some history, we believe we are delivering services to people from Boscobel and the surrounding areas where we see our catchment area, starting at Portland in St Peter and going through to Cave Hill Drive in St Lucy," Sobers said.

As for helping the community, the club – which has a membership of about 100, including 40 females – has adopted the Boscobel Primary School and has working relationships with about 12 to 14 churches in the area.

It also has close ties to northern sister clubs All Saints, Crickland and Diamondshire. Additionally, it has assisted some "needy cases" in the area.